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ABSTRACT

The University for Industry (UFI) and local information, advice, and guidance (IAG) partnerships are two key aspects of the British Government's lifelong learning strategy. UFI's key role is to expand the demand for and supply of learning and to exploit the learning potential of information and communication technologies. The main UFI activities likely to impinge directly on local IAG services are Learning Direct and UFI Learning Centres. UFI would develop and run Learning Direct as a freely available public service, offering impartial information and advice on the full range of learning opportunities. Learning Direct would be made available on the Internet. A nationwide network of UFI-endorsed Learning Centres would offer learners points of entry into learning, learning facilities, and learner support services; UFI Learning Advisors would offer advice and learner support. The government intends to promote a partnership approach to the delivery of local IAG services likely to involve a contract with a single lead organization. An important issue is the relationship of UFI and IAG partnerships to the new Lifelong Learning Partnerships, strategic bodies designed to bring greater coherence to local learning provision, and the development of local targets linked to the new National Targets for Education and Training. Recommendations have been made for the following: (1) Learning Direct and IAG partnerships; (2) UFI Learning Centres and IAG partnerships; (3) role of the lead organization in IAG partnerships; (4)a seamless service, (5) quality, (5) branding, and (6) customer focus. (YLB)

CRAC NICEC
Conference Briefing

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TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

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The University for Industry and Local Information, Advice and Guidance Partnerships

Report on a NICEC/CRAC policy consultation held on 24-25 February 1999 at Madingley Hall, Cambridge, in association with the National Advisory Council for Careers and Educational Guidance

sponsored by the Individual Learning Division and the University for Industry Division of the Department for Education and Employment

NICEC

The National Institute for Careers Education and Counselling is a network organisation sponsored by CRAC. It conducts applied research and development work related to guidance in educational institutions and in work and community settings. Its aim is to develop theory, inform policy and enhance practice through staff development, organisation development, curriculum development, consultancy and research.

CRAC

The Careers Research and Advisory Centre is a registered educational charity and independent development agency founded in 1964. Its education and training programmes, publications and sponsored projects provide links between the worlds of education and employment.

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The University for Industry and local information, advice and guidance (IAG) partnerships are two key aspects of the Government's lifelong learning strategy. The aim of the consultation was to explore, and make recommendations on, the relationship between the two initatives.

The participants included representatives from the Department for Education and Employment (Careers and Information Division, Individual Learning Division, University for Industry Division), the Welsh Office, the Northern Ireland Training and Employment Agency, the University for Industry, the Employment Service, the Confederation of British Industry, the Trades Union Congress, the TEC National Council, the Employment Service, the Institute of Careers Guidance, the National Association for Educational Guidance for Adults, Training and Enterprise Councils involved in running UfI pilots, Careers Services, and other adult guidance services.

This report describes the main themes and issues to arise from the plenary and workshop sessions of the 24-hour consultation. The report has been prepared by Tony Watts (Director of NICEC). It does not necessarily represent the views of the project sponsor or of any particular participant at the event.

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The University for Industry

The University for Industry has a key role in the Government's lifelong learning strategy, concerned with:

- expanding the *demand* for learning;
- expanding the *supply* of learning, by re-engineering learning provision;
- in particular, exploiting the learning potential of *information and communication technologies*.

Part of this operation will be strategic in nature, designed directly to influence the lifelong learning system as a whole; part will be more operational, with its own commercial objectives. The latter will include endorsing and/or enhancing and/or commissioning learning materials. It seems likely that there will be some organisational separation between the strategic and operational functions, with the former being carried out by a registered charity and the latter by a trading company.

The main Ufl activities which are likely to impinge directly on local IAG services are:

- Learning Direct.
- Ufl Learning Centres.

Learning Direct

Ufl will develop and run Learning Direct as a freely available public service, offering impartial information and advice on the full range of learning opportunities (not only those available through Ufl). Planned developments include:

- Expanding the capacity of the existing helpline, enabling it to take many more calls.
- Enhancing the quality of the helpline through a diagnostic package which will enable Learning Direct advisers to give improved on-line help and also to "signpost" users to local IAG services where further help is required.

In addition, Learning Direct will be made available on the Internet, offering:

- A Learning Directory.
- Diagnostic packages which will enable individuals to assess their learning styles and their suitability for particular occupations subsequent to a learning episode.
- On-line seminars, newsgroups and live "chat" sessions.
- "Hot links" to a range of course providers and learning materials providers.
- Facilities for e-mailing enquiries.

Ufl Learning Centres

A nation-wide network of Ufl-endorsed Learning Centres will offer learners:

- Points of entry into learning.
- Learning facilities (especially PC work-stations) for those who lack such facilities at home or at work.
- Learner support services (many of which will also operate virtually for those who wish to access them in that way).

Ufl Learning Advisers will offer:

- Advice, particularly related to Ufl-endorsed learning opportunities.
- Learner support.

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IAG partnerships

The Government has announced its intention to promote a partnership approach to the delivery of local IAG services. This is likely to involve a contract with a single lead organisation in each area for such delivery, with the proviso that:

- It will need to demonstrate significant involvement by relevant statutory and other local agencies (including community and voluntary groups).
- From 2001, all providers who are members of a local partnership will need to possess the Guidance Council Quality Mark, and to demonstrate that staff are appropriately qualified, as a condition of grant.

The Government has committed funding of £7m for 1999-2000, £19m for 2000/1, and £28m for 2001/2. It seems likely that the first year's funding will be allocated to:

- Setting up partnerships in a number of "pathfinder" areas to run a full range of services and to test out some of the key policy issues.
- Providing "seed money" for the development of partnerships in other areas.
- Providing funding to establish the Guidance Council's quality-assurance processes.

Lifelong Learning Partnerships

An important issue is the relationship both of UfI and of IAG partnerships to the new Lifelong Learning Partnerships. The latter are to be strategic bodies designed to bring greater coherence to local learning provision, and to develop local targets linked to the new National Targets for Education and Training. Included in their remit is "to create a more coherent, effective and accessible set of local arrangements for learning, careers advice and guidance, student support, etc."

The "core" partners in local Lifelong Learning Partnerships are:

- FE sector colleges.
- Local authorities and schools.
- Training and Enterprise Councils.
- Careers services.

Other members are likely to vary, but may include higher education, the Employment Service, employers, trade unions, the churches, voluntary and community bodies, the Youth Service, and statutory agencies in the social inclusion field.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Learning Direct and IAG partnerships

Recommendation 1. Clear procedures are needed for referral of learners and potential learners from Learning Direct to local IAG services where local information and advice, or more in-depth guidance, are required. One of the tasks of IAG partnerships should be to agree local arrangements for such referral, and to notify Learning Direct of these arrangements.

Recommendation 2. When Learning Direct advisers give information or local IAG contact details to clients, they should invite clients to ring back within two weeks if their needs have not been met by the information or the referral point. Consideration should also be given to advisers initiating routine follow-up calls after a fortnight: this would have the benefit of eliciting positive as well as negative feedback, and of developing a relationship with callers.

Recommendation 3. Learning Direct should monitor client feedback and pass it to local IAG partnerships and thence to learning providers. The procedures for aggregating this feedback information need careful consideration, as does its relationship to the client-feedback mechanisms for the Guidance Council Quality Standards and to the quality-assurance procedures for local learning provision. The effective combination of feedback information from Learning Direct and from IAG partnerships could however provide a far more powerful and effective focus for the feedback role of IAG that has been available hitherto.

Recommendation 4. Learning Direct and IAG partnerships should find a way of transferring clients' records between agencies while also respecting clients' ownership of these records. One possible model would be for the Learning Direct adviser to request information from the client and to input it on to an individual webpage. The password to access the page would be given to the client, and then – with the client's permission – it could be accessed by relevant IAG partnership members. This would allow the client to avoid having to repeat basic and/or sensitive information. The same process could be used with clients who access Learning Direct via the Internet. The compatibility of these proposals with the Data Protection Act would need to be reviewed.

Ufl Learning Centres and IAG partnerships

Recommendation 5. Close links are needed between Ufl Learning Centres and IAG services:

- To ensure that there are effective pre-entry and exit IAG services in relation to Ufl-endorsed learning opportunities, plus opportunities for learners to check/revise their decisions.
- To provide local feedback to Ufl from IAG services about gaps in current provision.
- To recognise the importance of informal learning and of "gentle steps" in enabling reluctant learners to access formal learning.

In most respects, IAG services' links with Ufl Learning Centres will be similar to their links with other learning providers.

Role of the lead organisation in IAG partnerships

Recommendation 6. The responsibilities of the lead organisation should be defined by DfEE, and should include:

- Acting as the accountable body for funding.
- Contract management.
- Purchasing and ensuring adequacy of provision.
- Supply-chain management.
- Agreeing targets and outcomes (qualitative as well as quantitative).
- Marketing and promotion.
- Quality assurance (as part of the implementation mechanisms for the Guidance Council standards).

- Facilitating the development and capacity-building of the local partnership, including support to partnership members.
- Co-ordinating arrangements for tracking of clients.
- Co-ordinating feedback to local learning providers from the partners and from Learning Direct.
- Representing the IAG partnership on the local Lifelong Learning Partnership (if it is not already a member of the LLP, it should be added).

In choosing the lead organisation, consideration needs to be given to:

- whether or not it is preferable for the lead organisation to be an IAG provider itself;
- the balance between guidance skills and contract-management skills.

Recommendation 7. For trust to be built within IAG partnerships, there should be a protocol within each partnership indicating the roles and responsibilities both of the lead organisation and of each partner. Success criteria need to be set, drawing on lessons from previous partnerships regarding:

- How they should be set up.
- How they should operate.
- How their outcomes should be measured, both qualitatively and quantitatively.
- What mechanisms there should be for reviewing their progress.

A seamless service

Recommendation 8. IAG services should, as far as possible, be presented in a seamless form to users. This means a fully co-ordinated range of services (which may or may not include "one-stop shops"), comprising e.g.

- Local links to Learning Direct.
- Website.
- High street "shop".
- Outreach to individuals and communities.
- Peripatetic services to organisations (including employers).

These should include referral to a variety of guidance opportunities, some of which will be free and some fee-charged: the nature of any fee-charging should be made clear from the outset.

Regardless of where and how individuals approach the local network of IAG provision, they should have ready access to the full range of services provided within the network. These should be differentiated in ways which enable individuals to relate them to their perceived needs. They should cover IAG related to learning, to work, and to the interaction between them.

Quality

Recommendation 9. The quality of local IAG provision should be assured through the Guidance Council standards *or* through local standards benchmarked against the Guidance Council standards. These should include attention to the competence of staff, which should range:

- from those included on a Register of Guidance Practitioners, who should be qualified to NVQ level 4 in guidance, should demonstrate commitment to continuing professional development and to a code of ethics/standards, and should have had at least two years' relevant experience;
- to a minimum level of competence, which should include when and to whom to refer clients whose needs extend beyond the staff member's own levels of competence.

Relevant units from the Occupational Standards should be identified for each role within the partner providers. In developing the Register of Guidance Practitioners, careful negotiation is needed between ICG, NAEGA and other relevant professional bodies. The Guidance Council should be involved in these discussions to ensure that such developments are reflected in its Quality Standards.

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Branding

Recommendation 10. Immediate attention is needed to clear branding of information, advice and guidance services. This is critical:

- for promoting such services, so assuring ease of recognition and "growing the market";
- for assuring clients of standards of service.

Branding needs to be national and to comprise both a logo and a strapline. It should be based on the Guidance Council Quality Standards.

There should be one national brand (possibly supplemented by local branding) for all members of IAG partnerships, regardless of whether they offer the full range of services or only a restricted range. In the latter case, access to other services can be provided through referral arrangements.

Consideration should also be given to whether the brand should apply to Learning Direct, and also e.g. to services provided by employers.

Attention is needed to these issues now, to avoid the danger that local solutions will be found which then prove difficult to co-ordinate nationally. DfEE should take the lead in conducting the appropriate negotiations with the Guidance Council and other relevant bodies.

Customer focus

IAG services have a responsibility for making the learning system transparent to, accessible to, and responsive to, learners and potential learners. It is therefore particularly important that such services should themselves be transparent, accessible and responsive.

Recommendation 11. Systematic evaluation/feedback should be built into the objectives and procedures of IAG partnerships, in order to fully understand and respond to customer needs. These procedures should focus on the measurement of an individual's personal development and/or employability, rather than on narrow targets like placement into courses or jobs. Examples include:

- Completing activities agreed during the IAG process, even if these represent small steps towards long-term goals.
- Developing techniques for self-reflection and for reviewing one's own progress.

Both qualitative and quantitative indicators should be used. More work is needed on instruments for collecting such information.

Funding should also be provided for long-term client follow-up, using a variety of methods. This should be linked to providing continuing support for clients.

Recommendation 12. New models should be created by IAG partnerships for multi-agency staff development and training which recognise:

- the changing context, particularly the changing structures of work and the growing importance of sustaining employability;
- the skills needed to offer initial and continuing support, reflecting a holistic approach, to a range of learners/clients;
- the skills needed to offer IAG as part of a learning programme.

Recommendation 13. The structure and funding of services should demonstrate responsiveness to customer needs. Outreach activity is particularly important in this respect. It may not be best carried out by traditional or mainstream services: capacity-building should be encouraged to develop non-traditional outreach provision (many people relate most easily to people who they feel talk and think like them).

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